

Office of Tax Simplification: new board member announced

Press release

Professor Judith Freedman CBE has joined the OTS board



The Chancellor has appointed Professor Judith Freedman CBE to the Board of the Office of Tax Simplification (OTS), in succession to Paul Johnson CBE.

OTS Chair, Kathryn Cearnis OBE said:

I am delighted to welcome Judith to the OTS Board. She will bring invaluable academic expertise, including a long-standing interest in tax simplification. She will strengthen the ability of the OTS to provide the government with advice on how to simplify the tax system.

I would also like to place on record our appreciation for all the input and advice that Paul Johnson has provided during his time as a member of the Board.

Further Information

The OTS was established in 2010 to provide advice to the Chancellor on simplifying the UK tax system and was made a permanent, independent office of HM Treasury in July 2015. It was put on a statutory footing in the Finance Act 2016.

Judith Freedman is Pinsent Masons Professor of Taxation Law and Policy at Oxford University. She was a joint founder of the Oxford University Centre for Business Taxation and contributed to the Mirrlees Review on Reforming the Tax System for the 21st Century. She is General Editor of British Tax Review, chair of the Tax Law Review Committee of the Institute of Fiscal Studies and on the Advisory Group of the Tax Administration Research Centre.

The members of the OTS Board are now:

- Kathryn Cearns OBE (Chair)
- Bill Dodwell (Tax Director)
- Teresa Graham DBE (Senior Independent Director)
- John Cullinane
- Kathleen Russ
- Professor Judith Freedman CBE
- Beth Russell (HM Treasury)
- Ruth Stanier OBE (HMRC)

Press enquiries only please contact Julie Gillespie, OTS Press Officer 03000 585028

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[Leeds trial using nature to reduce flood risk gets on its marks](#)

A trial is being launched by the Environment Agency and University of Leeds at the Brownlee Triathlon Centre to look at how nature can be used to help reduce flood risk.

This will be the first urban pilot site set up as part of the Leeds Flood Alleviation Scheme's natural flood management (NFM) project.

It is being launched at the centre, owned by University of Leeds, to inspire students and the Leeds community to test how natural solutions such as creating wetlands can be used to help reduce the risk of flooding along the River Aire and in Leeds.

The site will be used to showcase many innovative ways to deliver NFM which will be used for academic research and help to develop practical ways to monitor different techniques and gather evidence on their success. When work on this urban pilot site begins towards the end of the year, it will be carried out in line with the latest government guidelines on social distancing.

Five pilot sites have been set up as part of the Leeds Flood Alleviation Scheme using techniques such as woodland creation, wetland scrapes and leaky barriers.

Holly Radcliffe Leeds NFM project manager from the Environment Agency, said:

We are very grateful to University of Leeds for working with us to

develop a pilot site at the Brownlee Triathlon Centre to trial and test natural flood management.

The Triathlon Centre is a real asset for students and the local community, and are excited to work further with them to develop suitable designs for the site. "We hope that visitors will also be able to learn about how effective NFM techniques can be.

As the country faces a national and global climate emergency, restoring our natural environment is an important component to help reach net zero emissions in the future.

Natural Flood Management offers potential for climate mitigation, for example, creating wetlands, restoring our uplands and planting trees can help to capture tonnes of carbon from the atmosphere.

James Wright, from grounds and gardens team at University of Leeds, said:

We are delighted to be working with the Environment Agency on a natural flood management project at the Brownlee Centre.

This is a great opportunity to showcase the huge benefits of working with natural process to Leeds Community and academic partners across the university.

Councillor Judith Blake, Leader of Leeds City Council said:

This first urban pilot of the natural flood management programme is an exciting addition to the range of natural solutions we are exploring across the catchment to reduce flood risk. This approach can bring many different benefits so this is a promising opportunity to both enhance the local environment whilst building our resilience to climate change.

The site earmarked for the project is at Bodington Playing Fields to the north east of Leeds city centre.

The Brownlee Triathlon site earmarked for the project is to the north east of Leeds city centre.

Proposals for the site currently include:- • Woodland creation – planting almost 4,000 trees and hedges at various locations across the site • Measures

to improve the management of the flow of surface water including grass covered earth bund -embankments which act as flood barriers to store water and pocket wetland – to be formed from series of wetland scrapes (shallow ponds) to control storm-water • An interactive information board to educate visitors about the benefits of each type of NFM and monitoring taking place on the site • A teaching area for groups, for example a two-tier grass covered amphitheatre, formed as an earth bund, an NFM measure and benches made from wood from various tree species on site • Demonstration areas featuring how to build your own leaky dam, the life-cycle of a tree and a sand pit where you can re-meander a straightened water channel • A discovery walk featuring sculptures, nature base art, activities, wildlife spotting, edible hedges and a sensory trail • Creation of a virtual tour of the site using 360 degree photographs

This pilot site will be part of the flagship Natural Flood Management (NFM) programme which forms part of the second phase of the Leeds Flood Alleviation Scheme alongside traditional engineering.

The development of the scheme is being led by Leeds City Council, working alongside the Environment Agency. This phase got underway this year and aims to invest £112.1 million in flood prevention measures for areas upstream of Leeds city centre, to better protect 1,048 homes and 474 businesses.

The NFM element is transformational in scale working with nature to reduce the risk of flooding across the catchment from the source of the River Aire, at Malham, through to Leeds City Centre. The programme will not only reduce flow of water from upstream so the landscape can hold more water in times of flood but also restore and create new habitat, increase biodiversity resilience and improve water quality. As well as tree and hedge planting, it includes re-channelling rivers to their natural courses, soil aeration, wetland creation and moorland restoration all of which have lots of benefits for people and wildlife.

This will contribute to delivering the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan and realising the vision of the Northern Forest in the Aire catchment.

For more information about the LeedsFAS [visit](#)

If you have land and would like to know more about how you could be involved in an NFM project, please get in touch with the project team and provide your contact details and they will get back to you. Email: LeedsFAS.nfm@environment-agency.gov.uk

[The British Embassy Ashgabat opens its](#)

call for project proposals

Call for project proposals to support the prevention, preparedness and response to the severe acute respiratory infectious diseases, particularly COVID-19

The British Embassy Ashgabat has now opened its call for project proposals for project work in Turkmenistan for the period April 2020 – March 2021. The Embassy will provide funding up to \$50,000 per project for successful project ideas that support activities related to Turkmenistan's national plan to prevent and respond to the spread of acute respiratory infectious diseases. Smaller-scale project proposals are also welcome. An emphasis will be placed on the efforts:

- to prevent the penetration of severe acute respiratory infectious diseases, particularly COVID-19, into the country
- to prevent their spread and mitigate potential health risks
- to train and raise awareness of health personnel and ordinary population
- to maintain the pace of socio-economic development of the country during the global pandemic, with a focus on vulnerable groups such as women, children, older people and people with disabilities

This assistance is part of the UK Government's broader COVID-19 global response to help the authorities respond effectively to the pandemic and its negative impacts.

Eligibility criteria

In order to be eligible, the implementing partner must demonstrate:

- a proven record of successful implementation and delivery of similar projects in Turkmenistan
- sufficient operational, financial, human and expert capacities to deliver the expected results
- be legally able to carry out the activities indicated in the bid

Potential implementers may combine efforts and submit their project proposals in consortium of several organisations (implementers). Those could be both international and local organisations.

Bidding guidance

The selection process will be competitive, fair and transparent. All proposals must have a clear purpose supported by achievable and measurable outputs/results (i.e. specific deliverables, outputs with indicators) and outcome(s) (the anticipated change resulting from the relevant project outputs and activities).

The proposals must be submitted in English using the appropriate project proposal form (A or B) and a fully developed activity-based budget with a

financial breakdown on an Excel spreadsheet:

- Project Proposal Form A should be used for projects between \$15,000 and \$50,000 or the equivalent in local currency
- Project Proposal Form B should be used for smaller-scale, high-impact or exploratory projects up to \$15,000 or the equivalent in local currency

Implementing partners need to break down all activity costs into components so that it is clear how they are made up and which month each payment is due. You should provide as much detail as possible (e.g. figures for a workshop should be broken down into costs for the venue, catering, travel costs, etc.)

Implementing partners should not directly procure COVID-19-related medical supplies. This includes: personal protective equipment (PPE), oxygen-related equipment (incl. ventilators) and diagnostic tests/materials. Instead, the private sector is encouraged to increase local production and supply of medical supplies where possible.

As a rule, project funding should not be used to buy equipment, particularly those that an implementing agency should reasonably be expected to provide itself (business as usual items). However, the Embassy can exceptionally approve some purchases if there is a genuine need and the implementing partner could not be expected to hold such equipment as part of its core business operations.

The combined total of management fees, overheads and administration costs specifically related to the project (e.g. rent, project management, mandatory operational or legal costs, office maintenance, utilities, communications, stationery, bank charges, other crosscutting staff costs not directly attributable to the project, etc.) should not exceed 10% of the overall project budget. Management fees, if any, should be reflected as a fixed sum and not as a percentage of the budget.

The Embassy does not routinely make advance payments to implementing partners. The final payment to implementing partners will not be made before the Embassy receives project completion and financial reports, and is satisfied that the project has been delivered and completed satisfactorily.

Although for-profit/commercial organisations can submit project proposals for grant funding in response to a call for bids, no organisation of any kind is permitted to make a profit from a grant award.

All agreed project activities must be completed before 1 March 2021.

Selection criteria and bids assessment

All project proposals will be assessed against the following criteria:

- alignment with the above mentioned objectives

- buy-in of the key beneficiaries/stakeholders of the project. An analysis of the project beneficiaries/stakeholders should be carried out during the preparation of the project, including consultation with the key beneficiaries/stakeholders. The project proposal should make clear who the key beneficiaries/stakeholders are and the level of their support for the project
- project outcomes that are measurable, realistic, impactful and achievable within the funding period
- project design that includes clear monitoring and evaluation procedures
- sustainability, demonstrating that project benefits continue after the funding ends. Are the stated assumptions on sustainability too optimistic? How realistic is it that the changes will continue after the funding runs out?
- risk and financial accountability procedures. Implementing partners need to demonstrate how they would mitigate potential risks to project delivery. The aim is not to discourage projects with a high-level of risk, but to provide assurance that risk is being managed systematically and escalated appropriately when necessary
- the organisation's safeguarding policies to ensure the protection of beneficiaries
- feasibility of project delivery under current circumstances
- overall value for money. Have costs been reduced as far as possible? Will the project deliver the best product for the best price? Will the project support and deliver against our objectives?

Timing

To apply for British Embassy funding organisations must submit completed applications to eldar.latypov@fco.gov.uk by 22 June 2020.

Additional guidance and documentation

[Update on Fisheries Response Fund: Further payment for eligible businesses](#)

News story

Qualifying businesses will receive a further and final payment under the Fisheries Response Fund. A £10 million fund announced by the government in response to Covid-19.



Picture of the coast looking out to sea

Qualifying fishing and aquaculture businesses will receive a further and final payment from the government's £10 million Fisheries Response Fund.

[Eligible businesses](#) will be contacted by the Marine Management Organisation and payments will be made directly into business accounts by June 15.

So far more than 1200 fishing and aquaculture businesses have received payments from the Fund for April and May. The payment for June is the final payment from this Fund.

The Fund included £1m for the Domestic Seafood Supply Scheme, a grant scheme for projects to support the sale and consumption of locally caught fish. A joint endeavour between Defra, Cefas, the fishing industry and MMO, the first successful projects were awarded grants this week. The judging panel is due to review further projects on 8 June.

The Fund has been welcomed by the fishing industry which warned of businesses closing unless help was provided.

Tom McCormack, CEO, MMO, said: "We mobilised quickly to be able to put both of these funds in place and ensure the cash from the Treasury and the Maritime and Fisheries Fund was invested directly into the fishing industry at the earliest opportunity."

Please see [MMO's guide](#) to further assistance and support available the fishing industry.

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[**Webinar: Why do laboratories get it**](#)

wrong?

News story

Michael Walker will talk in detail about the process involved in the resolution of technical disputes in the UK official food control system after an introduction by Julian Braybrook



During this first webinar in June 2020, which will take place instead of the Government Chemist conference, [now postponed until June 2021](#), [Dr Michael Walker](#), Head of the Office of the Government Chemist and Referee Analyst, will discuss common issues leading to appeals for referee analysis.

The webinar will start with an introduction by [Dr Julian Braybrook](#) on the role of the Government Chemist. Dr Michael Walker will describe the technical appeal safeguard and the control system in the often complex cases where appeal has been invoked. Michael will reflect on lessons on why labs can produce discordant results in many areas including food allergens, contaminants, choking hazards, food additives, veterinary and pesticides residues and GMOs.

The webinar will take place live on 24 June at 15.00 (UK time) and there will be opportunity for questions.

Registration is free, [register here](#) to get your event link.

For more information about the work the Government Chemist does contact:

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